

Exploring Christian Nationalism

This month we will look at a movement in the United States that is being identified as “Christian nationalism.” This is not a movement about religious doctrine, rather it centers around cultural beliefs among certain groups of people related to the primacy of Christianity in our body politics. We will draw on several research studies, journalistic articles, video presentations, and sources from the Christian nationalist movement. In the end, we hope to have a better understanding of what Christian nationalism stands for and where it is going politically.

To guide us in preparation for the seminar, we would first recommend you read the article, “What is Christian nationalism, exactly?” by David French in the February 24 issue of the New York Times. (A copy of the article is available here on the website.) Mr. French recommends watching the film “God and Country,” which you can rent on Amazon prime. French offers several other links to help us better understand this movement. We also have listed these links below, along with several others we feel are important.

An article worth reading and recommended by David French in the Washington post is “What is Christian nationalism anyway?” “<https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2023/05/19/christian-nationalism-religion-politics/>

Here are two research studies completed on the topic of Christian nationalism. The first is entitled “Taking America Back for God” by Andrew Whitehead and Samuel Perry, published by the Oxford University press in 2020. A short summary of the study is available at <https://englewoodreview.org/andrew-whitehead-samuel-perry-taking-america-back-for-god-review/>

The second study “UNDERSTANDING THE THREAT OF CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM TO AMERICAN DEMOCRACY AND CULTURE” by the Brookings Institute is a comprehensive view of the issues and builds on the previous study by Whitehead and Perry. <https://www.prri.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/PRRI-Jan-2023-Christian-Nationalism-Final.pdf>

David French also recommends the following four resources for better understanding Christian nationalism:

1. What is the Seven Mountain Mandate, Prophecy

<https://carm.org/new-apostolic-reformation/what-is-the-seven-mountain-mandate-prophecy/>

2. What is dominion theology

<https://carm.org/carm/what-is-dominion-theology/>

3. National Conservatism: A Statement of Principles

<https://nationalconservatism.org/national-conservatism-a-statement-of-principles/>

4. New Apostolic Reformation

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Apostolic_Reformation

Finally, there are several videos that add much to the discussion about Christian nationalism. The first video as mentioned above is produced by Rob Reiner and is available on Amazon prime titled “God and Country”

The second video we would also like to recommend is a good discussion by Neil Shenvi titled “Is Christian nationalism a real problem or an overblown strawman”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OblfMVGvzjM>

The following questions should help us in our discussion of Christian nationalism.

- The Brookings Institute paper states, “White evangelical Protestants are more supportive of Christian nationalism than any other group surveyed. Nearly two-thirds of white evangelical Protestants qualify as either Christian nationalism sympathizers (35%) or adherents (29%).” To generate interest and to establish “brand loyalty,” evangelical Protestantism leans more heavily on the rhetorical skill and charismatic personality of the pastor or leader of the congregation and other leaders in the movement than do Christian traditions based more heavily on traditional canon and rites such as Catholicism and the Latter Day Saints. What role does pastor rhetoric and personality play in evangelical Christianity’s interest in Christian nationalism?
- The term “Christian values” is used often in questions regarding Christian nationalism, yet none of the studies offer a comprehensive definition of this term. What, in your mind, are “Christian values”? Can these be applied to society as a whole in a compelling way?
- Paula White and Michael Flynn are “headliners” in events touring the country that espouse NAR and other Christian nationalist interests. Ms. White’s background is theological while General Flynn’s influence arose through his career in the military. What might we speculate are their interests in Christian nationalism? Do their interests coincide, or are they in competition with one another? What might their influence be in a sympathetic presidential administration?
- From what you know of Christian nationalism, what do you think its influence is on public policy, both now and in a potential future? Does your answer differ when you think globally as opposed to that of the United States?
- The canonical Christian texts, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, don’t credit the man Jesus with having too much to say about politics and society in general. Jesus didn’t found a church, he encouraged his followers to stay out of politics (Render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s...), spoke against violence, and encouraged his followers to be humble in their approach to religion (Matthew 6:6). Does this resonate well with what we know of Christian nationalism?
- Neil Shenvi speaks out in opposition to the concept that the founding documents of the United States are, or even could be, spoken from the divine. How do you imagine Christian nationalist leaders respond to this?
- Neil Shenvi points out that individual citizens, no matter what their religious beliefs, always bring their values and cultural preferences into political decision-making. Does this differ from the way Christian nationalists involve themselves in the political process?
- The Ten Commandments, which outline the foundation of Jewish identity and law, include admonitions against the making of graven images, and against stealing, lying, taking the Lord’s

name in vain, committing adultery, and being covetous. They insist that we keep the Sabbath day holy, that we recognize and worship but one God, and that we honor our parents. All of these are stated equally, and none is listed as being any more or less important than any of the others. Should the laws of the United States be based on these?

- Jesus reduced the Decalogue to just two commandments, love your God with all of your heart and with all of your soul and with all of your mind, and Love your neighbor as yourself. In what we've read about Christian nationalism, does it value these ideals as supreme as Jesus commanded?
- The authors of *Taking America Back for God* conclude their research with the following: "Threats to the 'traditional' (patriarchal, heterosexual, nuclear) family are not just the symptoms of sin in a fallen world. They are threats to the very fabric of American society. Consequently, the solution is not merely converting those souls to faith in Jesus Christ. The solution is the political reinforcement of godly order in covenant marriage laws, the elimination of no-fault divorce, constitutional amendments defining marriage as between a man and a woman, prohibiting of transgender persons from serving in the military, legislation that requires persons to use bathrooms corresponding to their sex at birth, and protecting religious freedom to discriminate against sexual and gender minorities." A recent Gallup survey showed 68% of Americans are Christian, 22% have no affiliation, and 7% other affiliations. When asked how important religion is to Americans, 48% said very important, 26% said not important at all, and 24% indicated it was fairly important. Similar surveys clearly demonstrate strong support for LGBTQ rights, especially among younger Americans. Given the present American culture, what is the likelihood that Christian nationalist will be able to push their political agenda?

David white and Aram Terzian